

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 NSCE-00 /011 R

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 065478

EXDIS TOSEC 965

FOR ATHERTON FROM SOBER

FOL REPEAT OF MANAMA 312 TO SECSTATE MARCH 13

QTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 312

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS : MARR, BA, US

SUBJECT : MIDDLE EAST FORCE REASSURANCES REGARDING
FORCE ROLE

REFERENCE : (A) MANAMA 256

(B) STATE 46687

1. IN MARCH 12 MEETING, FOREIGN MINISTER INFORMED ME
GOVERNMENT OF BAHRAIN HAD CAREFULLY REVIEWED OUR PROPOSED
LETTER OF REASSURANCES AND HAD RECONFIRMED ITS DECISION
THAT OUR LETTER FALLS SHORT IN AN ESSENTIAL RESPECT OF
MEETING GOB'S NEED TO "LIVE AT PEACE WITH ITS NEIGHBORS"
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WHILE MAINTAINING THE SORT OF HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP WITH

U.S. NAVY PRESENCE IT ANTICIPATES IN FUTURE. HENCE, GOB IS REQUESTING WE ADD FOLLOWING SENTENCE, PRESUMABLY AT END OF KEY THIRD PARAGRAPH OF LETTER AS AMENDED (REFTELS): QTE THE FACILITIES EXTENDED BY THE BAHRAIN GOVERNMENT TO THE UNITED STATES MIDDLE EAST FORCE WILL NOT BE UTILISED IN ANY MANNER TO ASSIST OR SUPPORT DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY ANY MILITARY ACTION OR OPERATION AGAINST NEIGHBORING STATES IN THE GULF AREA. UNQTE

2. I REMINDED FOREIGN MINISTER THAT MY INSTRUCTIONS ARE TO URGE GOB TO ACCEPT OUR LETTER AS IT STANDS. HE SAID GOVERNMENT CLEARLY UNDERSTANDS THIS, HAS CONSIDERED OUR REQUEST AND MUST "IN FRIENDSHIP" URGE THAT WE ADD SUBSTANCE OF THIS ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE.

3. I POINTED OUT GOB LANGUAGE PLACED A RESTRICTION (ALBEIT A PURELY HYPOTHETICAL ONE IN VIEW HISTORY AND MISSION OF MIDDLE EAST FORCE) ON THE USE OF THE FACILITIES, NOT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE FORCE ITSELF. COULD I POINT OUT THIS DISTINCTION IN CONVEYING GOB REQUEST TO WASHINGTON? FOREIGN MINISTER URGED THAT I DO SO, NOTING LANGUAGE HAD BEEN CAREFULLY DRAFTED WITH UNDERSTANDING THAT GOB CANNOT CONTROL, IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR, AND WOULD NOT PRESUME TO TRY TO DICTATE USES U.S. NAVY MIGHT MAKE OF MIDDLE EAST FORCE. ALL GOB SEEKS, AND FEELS IT MUST HAVE TO PERMIT CONTINUED NAVY PRESENCE IN CIRCUMSTANCES SUPPORTIVE OF, RATHER THAN DISRUPTIVE TO, GULF STABILITY IS ASSURANCE THAT BAHRAIN FACILITIES THEMSELVES WILL NOT BE INVOLVED IN ASSISTING OR SUPPORTING ACTION AGAINST NEIGHBORING STATES. FOREIGN MINISTER NOTED SEVERAL TIMES IMPORTANCE AND URGENCY GOB ATTACHES TO THIS REQUEST, AND SPIRIT OF GOOD RELATIONS IN WHICH IT IS MADE.

4. COMMENT: (A) I HAVE REVIEWED THIS GOB REQUEST WITH COMMANDER MIDDLE EAST FORCE. NEITHER HE NOR I FEEL THAT IN MEETING IT WE WOULD BE MAKING ANY COMMITMENT OR SURRENDERING ANY FLEXIBILITY BEYOND THE PRACTICAL REALITIES OF THE PRESENT MIDDLE EAST FORCE SITUATION. WHAT GOB IN FACT IS SAYING IS "IN ORDER FOR YOUR NAVY TO STAY HERE COMFORTABLY, TELL US IT WILL NOT DO THAT WHICH WOULD, WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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OR WITHOUT YOUR REASSURANCES, FORCE US TO THROW IT OUT IMMEDIATELY ANYWAY." IN SHORT, WHAT HAVE WE GOT TO LOSE?

(B) MARCH 8 I HAD OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH LEGAL MINISTER AL-BAHARNA PRIOR TO CABINET MEETING AT WHICH I BELIEVE OUR REASSURANCE POSITION WAS REVIEWED. I POINTED OUT CAREFULLY THAT WE WERE NOT SEEKING ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE FROM GOB BUT WERE RATHER URGING MOST STRONGLY THAT GOB ACCEPT OUR REASSURANCES AS THEY STAND. I WENT OVER POINTS I HAD

EARLIER COVERED WITH FOREIGN MINISTER (MANAMA 256) AND BAHARNA FULLY UNDERSTOOD OUR POSITION. ON MARCH 10 AND 11, PRESUMABLY AFTER CABINET DECISION WAS MADE, I MADE "COURTESY CALLS" ON AMIR AND PRIME MINISTER RESPECTIVELY IN WHICH LENGTHY, FRANK SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS GAVE THEM AMPLE OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE PROBLEM REASSURANCE LANGUAGE. THEY DID NOT, NOR DID I. POINT IS: I AM NOW CONVINCED THAT BOTH PRIME MINISTER AND AMIR FULLY UNDERSTAND AND HAVE CONSIDERED CAREFULLY OUR POSITION AS GIVEN IN MY APPROACH TO FOREIGN MINISTER AND HAVE APPROVED (IF NOT INSTIGATED) REQUEST REPORTED ABOVE. IN SUM, WE HAVE HAD A FULL HEARING BY BAHRAIN'S LEADERSHIP; HENCE, ATTEMPT TO PRESS OUR CASE FORMALLY WITH EITHER AMIR OR PRIME MINISTER WOULD BE SUBSTANTIVELY REPETITIVE AND COULD WELL BE ILL RECEIVED AS MATTER OF FORM.

(C) IN RECENT CALLS WITH ADMIRALS HANKS AND BIGLEY, AND IN MY OTHER RECENT CONTACTS WITH GOB, I HAVE BEEN STRUCK BY INTENSITY AND SINCERITY WITH WHICH AMIR, PRIME MINISTER, FOREIGN MINISTER AND OTHER CABINET OFFICERS HAVE EXPRESSED (1) THEIR PLEASURE AT CONTINUED MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE AND HOPE THAT POLITICAL SITUATION IN AREA WILL PERMIT IT TO REMAIN IN FRIENDLIEST, MOST COOPERATIVE OF CIRCUMSTANCES; AND (2) THEIR GRATIFICATION AT PRESENT EXCELLENT STATE OF US-BAHRAINI RELATIONS AND STRONG DESIRE, DESPITE THEIR PESSIMISTIC ASSESSMENT PRESENT PROSPECTS U.S. PEACE EFFORT, TO SEE THIS RELATIONSHIP EXPAND TO MUTUAL BENEFIT BOTH COUNTRIES. IN LIGHT THESE DISCUSSIONS, WE APPEAR TO HAVE COME TO END OF MIDDLE EAST FORCE NEGOTIATIONS IN AN ATMOSPHERE PROMISING FOR OVERALL US-BAHRAINI RELATIONS TO FIND ONE OBSTACLE, FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE MINOR AND ESSENTIALLY SEMANTIC, BEFORE US. I THINK WE SHOULD HURDLE IT BY ACCEPTING GOB REQUEST AND

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GET ON WITH THE FUTURE. END COOMMMSENTT..

4. RECOMMENDATION: THAT WE STOP STRAINING ON WHAT LOOKS FROM HERE TO BE A GNAT AND ACCEPT THE GOB'S SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE IN ORDER TO CONCLUDE THIS LONG NEGOTIATION SUCCESSFULLY WHILE THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION STILL PERMITS THE GOB TO DO SO.

5. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO PASS THIS MESSAGE TO SECDEF, CNO, JCS, CINCUSNAVEUR AND COMIDEASTFOR.
TWINAM UNQTE INGERSOLL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TROOP DEPLOYMENT, NAVAL FORCES, NEGOTIATIONS, TOSEC 965
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE065478
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA/ARP:QLUMSDEN
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750101-0633
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750324/aaaaavry.tel
Line Count: 165
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 MANAMA 256
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 AUG 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <21 NOV 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: : MIDDLE EAST FORCE REASSURANCES REGARDING FORCE ROLE
TAGS: MARR, BA, US
To: JERUSALEM
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006